



Riverside

RECONNECTS STREETCAR STUDY

Charrette Summary

Community Charrette
September 24, 2014
6pm to 8pm
César Chávez Community Center
2060 University Avenue, Riverside, CA 92507

A public charrette for the Riverside Reconnects Streetcar Study took place on September 24, 2014 at César Chávez Community Center. The meeting was held from 6 to 8 pm and was open to the public.

The meeting's presentation is available on the Project Website.

Introduction

The Meeting was kicked off by Jay Eastman, Principal Planner with the City of Riverside Community Development Department. Introductions were given for the project team and an overview of the project was presented. Councilman Andy Melendrez was in attendance and he briefly addressed the community members in attendance.

Project Team Members in Attendance:

BAE Urban Sherry Rudnak
Economics

PlaceWorks Karen Gulley
Suzanne Schwab

IBI Bill Delo

City Staff Jay Eastman, Principal Planner, Community Development
David Murray, Senior Planner, Community Development

Southern Steve Fox, Senior Regional Planner
California
Association of
Governments

Approximately 40 community members attended the meeting.
An interpreter was also available for Spanish speakers in attendance.



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Informational Presentation

Following introductions, Sherry Rudnak, Project Lead from BAE, gave a presentation recapping the outreach to date — 1 Community Workshop and 1 Steering Committee Meeting. She also reviewed the agenda and purpose for the evening — to gather focused in-depth information to inform the Project Team's analysis. Participants had been broken into 5 small groups and assigned to a table as they signed in.

Next, Karen Gulley, PlaceWorks, set the ground rules for group discussions and kicked off the small group exercises. Groups were not asked to come to a consensus, but were asked to listen and to be respectful of each other's ideas.

Each group rotated through 5 tables, discussing a different aspect of the study at each table. The table topics included:

- Table 1: Create an alignment from University of California, Riverside through Downtown and identify primary destinations for connection
- Table 2: Create an alignment from Downtown through the Magnolia Corridor, and identify primary destinations for connection
- Table 3: Explore system technologies
- Table 4: Identify opportunity areas for land use change
- Table 5: Prioritize evaluation criteria

Tables were given 15 minutes to discuss their ideas and complete their task with a facilitator at each table. Tables 1, 2, and 4 utilized large maps to document their ideas (the maps are available on the [project website](#)). Table 3 discussed system technologies by reviewing photo examples and filling out comment cards if they had additional points to make beyond their group discussion. Table 5 asked each person to fill out an Evaluation Criteria sheet ranking their top five criteria.

Group Alignment Presentations

The groups were then asked to present their alignments from Tables 1 and 2 (the maps are available on the [project website](#)). Each Project Team facilitator also presented a quick recap of the feedback at their respective tables.



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Evaluation Criteria Summary:

Individual participants were asked to prioritize the top 5 criteria that they would use to evaluate the feasibility of a streetcar in Riverside. They were asked to rank the criteria with 1 being the most important, and 5 being the least important. The results are as follows:

Top five (5) most important criteria:

- 1. Costs**
- 2. Connectivity to activity/employment**
- 3. Population and employment (community served within ½ mile of the Streetcar)**
- 4. Traffic impacts**
- 5. Land use compatibility**

Land Use Opportunity Maps:

Desired Uses Within the Study Area

- Housing with the downtown
- More restaurants
- Housing around CBU
- Expand retail and housing around Tyler Mall – new Victoria Gardens with housing
- Additional cultural amenities (museums)
- Live-work around Metrolink Stations
- Townhomes along University and 3rd Street
- Professional Sports Complex
- Additional retail and restaurants on Eastside
- Housing along Magnolia Corridor on vacant sites (variety of densities)
- Create a new node of mixed uses around La Sierra Station
- Create a new node of mixed uses along Magnolia at CBU and Hospital
- Intensify residential around Central and Magnolia
- Intensify Downtown with more housing and entertainment
- Focus new development around the Convention Center – lots of opportunities
- Parts of the Arlington area are very depressed – focus change in those areas

Concerns about Changes in Land Use

- There should not be any additional housing built in Riverside
- Higher density housing should not be concentrated, but spread out
- Concern that too many apartments are already planned for Magnolia Street
- Questions about the viability of mixed use development. Will it be successful?
- Preserve historic area of Magnolia corridor
- Streetcar should pass through areas suitable for new development and avoid historic areas
- Streetcar should serve the senior population



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- Don't want Riverside to look like San Francisco
- Limit new retail – too many vacant retail buildings in study area
- Preference of condos over rental apartments

System Technology:

Propulsion

- Overhead vs. Rail Power- Overhead is less expensive, but could be higher cost due to maintenance, and it could require tree removal
- Prefer in ground propulsion
- No wires above ground
- Electric is cleaner at source
- Could they be run like a driverless car?
- Prefer Hybrid fuel option- rechargeable
- Prefer Less infrastructure- no overhead or tracks in ground
- Modern hybrid, clean technology
- Prefer electric trolley without catenary wires
- Onboard propulsion
- Prefer in-ground self-propelled, would reduce aesthetic impacts
- City recently undertook efforts to bury power lines – catenary wires would counter this activity and not get community support.
- Tracks are limiting for movement around auto accidents, but give a sense of permanence.
- Unsure about the optimal amount of infrastructure to attract development and improvements, but offer flexibility and cost reduction.
- Interest in self-propelled rubber tire option.

Type

- Wheels vs. Rail- Wheels are more flexible
- Prefer the look of the modern streetcar
- The type of streetcar depends on the location- downtown could use historic trolley
- Prefer the look of the modern trolley
- Historic replica cars fit character of city.

Other

- Concerns: safety, aesthetics, infrastructure, and cost
- May need to balance infrastructure vs. temporary options
- Support more committed infrastructure options, cleaner energy sources, reduced aesthetic impact- despite costs
- Consider second hand and/or lighter weight cars to reduce costs
- Concerned about electric power source in event of power failure or earthquake.
- Interested in faster travel – consider giving priority to streetcar in lanes.



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- Concerned about maintenance costs – comment that City is currently behind on maintain Magnolia.
- Wants to know how other streetcar cities are doing with maintenance and economic development.



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Question and Answer Session

A question and answer period was conducted by the project team, the following feedback and questions were shared by public participants:

Legend

- = Community Question and Comments
- = Project Team Response

Questions:

- Are speculators buying real estate in the area?
→ There may be investors interested in the area but that is not part of the study, and it is too early in the process to know if the project will go beyond this feasibility study.
- What other cities similar to Riverside can we look to with a successful streetcar model?
→ Tucson, Charlotte, and Cincinnati- similar in that they are smaller scale urban centers with a suburban feel. Portland is much larger, but a good example. Within California, Fullerton, Anaheim and Santa Ana are also studying streetcar for their cities. Tucson's streetcar recently opened and has been advertising their success with economic development surrounding the streetcar. They received a \$1 billion TIGER Federal grant for their project. How success is ultimately determined is up to them... is it economic development? Ridership? Improvement in transit? Ultimately many cities are exploring forward thinking options for growth- which is something we are doing, but again this is just an early feasibility study.
- The term "forward thinking" was just used—streetcars are an old form of transportation we had them 100 years ago, How is bringing them back forward thinking? And RTA just spent tons of money on new CNG buses—we are losing money and I'm opposed to the idea of bringing a streetcar back.
→ The counter point to this argument is freeways. The purpose of a streetcar is to move people from point A to point B. In the early days of the automobile, roadway improvements eliminated streetcars, as people could choose to travel on their own schedule and within their own vehicle. Density (population growth) is challenging our freeway/roadway systems; we need to start planning to provide more mobility choices. This feasibility study is a starting point to explore other options to address capacity.
- What process is planned to gain more public input?
→ Steering Committee meetings just started, and there will be 5 more. The City will be launching MindMixer, an on-line forum for engagement. There is a short survey to take on



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the [project website](#), and a more in-depth statistically valid survey will be conducted later as a part of the study. We will also explore additional ways to get more student feedback.

- What is the measure of success? Is it the increased development of an area the streetcar flows through?
→ Several things will be considered and most of them will be determined by this study and future analysis. Tradeoffs for funding and cost need to be considered. Several other measures also factored include: ridership growth, economic development, transit options, etc. There is not a single outcome or solution that can be used to determine “success”.
- What will happen to existing land uses as these areas get more dense? Will there be a lot of change?
→ State regulations are pushing cities toward “smart growth” to create more dense areas, in hopes of reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. The focus is to promote growth in areas served by existing infrastructure, and accommodate growth rather than respond to unmanaged growth pressures. This study will not change land uses; but may inform future land use decisions.
- Has Agenda 21 had an influence/involvement on this study/project?
→ No.
- Is the study considering a method to change technology if we are looking 10 years plus down the road?
→ Technology advancements are hard to anticipate, although we are seeing a lot of popular electric transit options. However, right now few companies that meet Federal funding requirements. Other things that will factor into the technology discussion are the types of funding available, and system operations (i.e., private vs. public).

Community Comments (verbal and on comment cards):

- This seems like it is more about economic development and growth vs. serving the needs of the citizens.
- This is Rusty Bailey’s pipe dream. He needs to address the real problems in Riverside: neglected yards, dead orange groves, homeless people.
- What is the return on investment? Who pays and how?
- No Streetcars.

Next Steps

- Please keep checking the [project website](#) for announcements.